





Listening TO THE Inner Voice

BY TOM WENTZ

“Amazing! I tried it all week last week. At first I thought I had lost my mind. With the radio and cell phone off there was an eerie silence. Initially, I was beating on myself to go faster. There were two people pushing the accelerator pedal. One said go faster — the other said steady at ‘3.’ It wasn’t until the third day that I really knew who would be driving. I called them “ME” and “me.” There was this voice in “ME” that said I would be punished if I was late. But “me” said it will be okay — we won’t be late.

“ME” was “at war.”

“me” was “at peace.”

The chairman stopped and looked at me with a very strange expression and then said, “You knew I’d experience that reality — didn’t you?”

I nodded agreement and said, “The purpose of the drive ‘3’ experience is to make you aware that there is another person inside you that has likely been suppressed for many years. It is a potential person that can emerge if it is allowed to express itself. The same thing is true in your business. That same person is within all of your people. They would tell you how you should drive the company if you’d listen to them.”

Suggesting that he didn’t listen to his people made him a little defensive and he quickly wanted to include others for me to blame. “I told all of my presidents and plant managers to drive ‘3’ as a leadership assignment. They all tried it and gave up. They had lots of excuses — it was driving them crazy. I don’t think driving ‘3’ is the solution to our problems.”

“That’s probably true. When we are solving problems, we all enjoy the at-war orientation because we have an enemy to blame. We keep that orientation alive and the war going — if we’d lose our enemy, we wouldn’t have anything to do.”

I paused to let that thought sink in as this is a universal truth. “Furthermore, you, as their speed-limit controller have always been demanding that they speed and now they aren’t sure you are sincere. It is like the parent who speeds and then tells their teenage son to drive the speed limits.”

“Hypocrisy — right?”

“Could be. It depends on whether ‘ME’ or ‘me’ is giving the command. The ‘ME’ commander is warning him

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of the cops and the 'me' is coaching him to achieve his potential, and driving safe is a very important assignment for a young driver.

There was a long pause. It was best that I allowed him time to recall his commander role. "When people and companies are at-war, the Commander-in-Chief has provided justification for violating the rules. Speeding always feeds the ego of our Commander when we are successful at the win-lose game. It's great to get away with something. It becomes a way of life for many people. The Industrial Age Business Model is built on getting away with stuff and many companies are very good at developing business strategies that get away with 'gimme' putting."

That hit a tender nerve but one he was really trying to understand. He paused, "We have a lot of justifications for being at-war — right?"

"Right — until you need to be the 'me' role model for your son or a leader for your people. Then it all changes."

Waging Peace

His contemplative style kicked in so I continued to add to his understanding where his "me" must be present. "It is important to know that waging peace is a simple choice. The PGA pro must make that choice or he will not be on tour very long. Everyone on tour is committed to self-policing. Yes, there are always 'ME' temptations and the 'me' approach will cost them a stroke, but executing the 'ME' strategy will cost them their career."

The golf metaphor hit home, but he was still struggling with the business relevance. He emphatically said, "I know that in golf, but it is totally unrealistic to operate a business in that way. We've read about this leadership theory for years. It has all the buzz words — customer centric, empowerment — teamwork. At all of our rep council meetings we talk about how difficult it is to do business with some of our companies." He paused and then asked, "Or is it? Is waging peace the new buzzword?"

"It depends on who's driving your factory. It's a buzzword to 'ME' but it is the emergence of potential and relevance for 'me.' It's important to know that the person who is actually in control of the speed of your factory is your customer. If they are partnered with your companies, they must be "in control" of your factories. All decisions would be jointly made starting with the customer

pushing the accelerator pedal. They would only want to go as fast as the speed limits dictated by their customers.

"It is also important to recognize the emotional aspects of driving '3.' I suspect when you were driving '3,' you eliminated all fear from your journey. Other people who have mastered 3 have told me that they weren't pre-occupied by looking for the cops around the corner. They were able to focus on the road ahead, not looking in the rearview mirror for the cops to be chasing them down. They had what is called a generative consciousness, one that can create the future rather than defeat time."

He laughed and said, "You're right, I wasn't worried that there was a policeman around the curve where I had gotten tickets before. The worry was all gone. Matter of fact, I was hoping he'd be there so I could wave at him in a peaceful way."

"Let me ask a very important question. When you drove '3,' did you lose anything?" He was confused by the question so I restated it, "Did you lose out on anything where someone else won. Or, were you ever late for an important meeting?"

"No. One day I actually got here earlier. I think the traffic lights are programmed to force people to drive '3.' I made all the lights. Didn't race and stop and race and stop." He laughed, "I've run more yellow lights than you care to know. You know it's like my lawyer — he's an ambulance chaser."

He was on a roll and wanted to relate the rest of his experience. "On the fourth day my focus shifted from my agony over wasting time to the other people on the road. I was able to see other drivers not as idiots, rather as people engaged in the game of defeating time. I kept asking myself, 'What are they after that is so important that they drive that fast?' The answer was likely nothing. Its like the muscle memory in golf — it is instinctive and can't be defeated. They'll just get to work faster and have more time for coffee. I stopped at Starbucks and got my coffee. It was peaceful. It was the first time I didn't spill it."

After a pause to relate his many coffee spills, he continued, "Did I lose something by driving '3'? Nothing. The reverse was actually true. By the fourth day I was actually proud of myself that I was self-policing. I felt like a pro. It was really amazing."

Then abruptly he shifted the focus from his personal

experience to his job as chairman. “What do I do as the chairman every day that programs our managers and presidents to act out the at-war game? The traffic lights are programmed by someone to force people to drive ‘3.’ What do I need to do to program our companies to drive ‘3’?”

What a great question. When we can see that we have the ability as leaders to program people and companies and organizations of all kinds to wage peace, we are asking the right question.

Programming Releases Potential

“The programming you must provide has something to do with releasing their potential. But, somehow you’ve programmed them to hit the ball rather than swing the club. In business terms it is ‘hit the numbers.’ When the numbers aren’t sufficient to meet the linear projections, people will speed. There is always an efficiency issue holding them back. Being at-war gives your people justification for doing things wrong such as shipping poor quality products, making it cheaper, late shipments and seeing customers as idiots. If they are confronted on these issues, they will merely claim that they’re better than the mediocre competitor.”

“*Waging peace?*” He repeated that thought for almost a minute. “It sounds too simple but I think it is as you describe in this book, not easy.” He picked up *Leadership and Golf* and turned to the chapter about the Orange Ball players. “These people didn’t know the meaning of the orange balls until it was almost too late. They played the game as if their participation didn’t matter. Then . . .”

He paused and I could tell something finally made sense. “They were playing to get finished — to just let time expire. They were taking a knee. They were at a training seminar. They weren’t there to learn anything. They were there to endure the time. He paused to recall the golf simulation and then said, “They were there to tolerate the abuse that they would get from Ron. They were at-war with Ron in real life and they were afraid that he

would be his typical self and no one wanted to hear his rant again. Our plant managers are always at-war with our salespeople.”

“They needed to be playing knowing that their contribution would eventually be critical to the success of the whole. We have a lot of people who come to work to get finished and when their contribution really matters, they perform fairly well, but by then the customer satisfaction rating is only a ‘5.’”

Then he asked a very interesting question, “Why does calling what we sell ‘solutions’ matter? Customers don’t seem to resist?”

“Creating the future is not the same as solving problems from yesterday. It is about engaging in that generative consciousness of the ‘me.’ If you are focused on defeating the cops, you will spill your coffee and have lots of problems. In that mode you will need solutions, mainly a good attorney. Attorneys are solutions.”

He laughed as he recalled his comment about his ambulance chaser golf buddy. “Selling solutions isn’t wrong. It will simply program your companies to operate in the aftermath of yesterday. In many cases it is programming to save the job of a person who got caught trying to defeat time.

“We’ve all gained weight by eating fast food.”

He patted his stomach and said, “Defeating time is a major problem, isn’t it?”

The business environment is totally different today. Your customers must operate in real time. Real time is not about speed. It is about precision. It is about patience. It is about constancy and commitment. It is not about selling a solution because someone screwed up yesterday. Companies can’t afford to screw up yesterday. The economic impact is too great. The ATM machine must always be open. The scanners at Wal-Mart must always work. Amazon.com must ship books in real time. The programmers must be clear that the promise of *always* must never be compromised. That would be hypocrisy.”



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I paused and he was still listening, “Frankly, the at-war orientation starts by calling what you sell a solution. That is your command to man the fire hoses and chase the competition as you have better products and services. It isn’t wrong. It is very instinctive and your ‘ME’ gets a lot of satisfaction from the chase even though you seldom catch anything.”

I could see that his ‘ME’ and ‘me’ were in a massive debate. I think his ‘me’ had finally heard enough about the ‘ME’ game. He paused and then asked the pivotal question, “How can we activate the at-peace orientation? I’ve already told them to drive ‘3’ and that didn’t work. It seems like it will be a massive undertaking to do something like this.”

“You’re right — it took you three days to get comfortable with it. It might take three years for your companies to get it.”

“Three years! We don’t have that much time!”

“It’s not about time. It is about commitment, and I’m glad you feel some urgency to do it now. The simple truth is that this is an awareness issue, not an intelligence issue. After three days you became aware of how it could be totally different for you. You were in a battle with your intelligence. Many very intelligent people believe that war and peace are opposite states. That is not true — they simultaneously exist. War is simply a state when false assumptions are being executed. Peace exists when truth prevails. We all have an at-war ‘ME’ and an at-peace ‘me’ in us at all times. The ability to access the at-peace ‘me’ is a simple choice.”

He was very focused, so I continued, “Your companies could choose peace tomorrow. Matter of fact, there will be at-peace choices made many times today by many people. They are just not aware that that is the choice they are making. How to choose to be at-peace when confronted with conflict is a rare ability.”

With some sarcasm he said, “Turn the other cheek?”

“No — quite the contrary. Always is a high level strategic imperative. Professional golfers are confronted with bad lies and penalty strokes every round. They don’t throw clubs and yell at the caddie. Being at peace is not a passive approach to doing business. It takes a lot of discipline and focus initially to make the at-peace choices.”

His “me” kicked in again and he said, “I think I get it. One of our reps was telling me how he is spending time

just listening to his customers concerning their customer satisfaction ratings of our company. He’s slowing down and driving ‘3’ with his customers — right? Is that an example of real-time behavior?”

“That’s a great example.”

“After the call, he writes a letter that he calls a “discovery agreement” or something weird like a “care review.” He sent me some of the letters; the customers all said that we do some things very well, and on the other hand we still don’t “get it” — that we are always arguing with them about something. His name is John. He said he learned the skill of ‘listening deep’ at one of your sales workshops.”

“Yes, I know John. When he came to the workshop, he was frantic, trying to defeat time, selling solutions, beating himself up every day trying to get enough lines and customers. He learned to listen to his ‘me.’ It was buried deep.”

Our meeting came to an abrupt end as the chairman realized he had to go defeat time. He’s now aware of the importance of waging peace. He wanted to know what I did to John at our next meeting.

My manufacturing friend called the next day. “Glad you got the chairman off my back. He said we can speed *if we think it will do any good*. You must be driving him crazy.”

“That’s true but it is not ‘me.’ It was his ‘ME.’ It was keeping him awake all night pushing his pedal to the metal racing through yellow lights trying to defeat time. 